Assemblage 23

Tom Shear

Tom Shear began constructing music at home under the moniker **Man On A Stage** in the late 1980's. Most of the music was very simplistic and poorly constructed, with no vocals at first but as time went on they occurred more often. While working on **Man On A Stage**, Shear also was playing bass live for a punk-influenced band collectively known as the **Advocates**. Then in 1988 at a **Depeche Mode** concert, the **Assemblage 23** embryo was born. Shear was amazed by the industrial dance music that the opening DJ was spinning. This mixture of the electronic synth-pop sounds and heavier darker aggression proved to be an epiphany for him.

(The name **Assemblage 23** really has no meaning. Shear liked the idea of combining a name with numbers because it lent itself well to logo design, and had a nice phonetic ring to it.)

While in college, in addition to working on **Assemblage 23** non-stop, Shear also collaborated with two friends, Mike Ukstins and Matt Guenette on a synth-pop project, **Procession**. The band didn't last long, but provided Shear with performance experience and practice. At first, **Assemblage 23** was more of a hobby for Shear rather than a permanent project. There were occasional attempts and demos sent out, but when they lead to no interest in the band, Shear reverted back to making music for fun and his friends. In 1992, he self-released a collection of songs called *Wires*. Several radio stations began playing the new act, and fledging magazines, such as Industrial Nation, began to show interest.

But it was a side project of Shear's called **Nerve Filter** that helped **Assemblage 23** get some much needed recognition. On a whim, Shear sent copies of **Assemblage 23** and **Nerve Filter** to Peter Stone of **Xorcist**, who in return handed them over to Don Blanchard of the now defunct 21st Circuitry Records. However, Blanchard's interest was not in **Assemblage 23** but in **Nerve Filter**, although, a few **Assemblage 23** tracks would later be released on several compilations. Arts Industria released the first 'official' **Assemblage 23** song "Graverobber" on their *Construction No. 009* compilation. Several more times Shear sent out demos to various labels, and even while being frustrated by the lack of interest, he still wrote more **Assemblage 23** songs.

Finally in 1998, the Canadian label, Gashed Records signed **Assemblage 23** and released their first album, *Contempt* in 1999, and the follow-up, *Failure* in 2001. Shortly after the release of *Failure*, **Assemblage 23** had a falling out with Gashed Records and left the label to sign with Metropolis Records, who later that year re-released both *Contempt* and *Failure*. With only those two albums, *Contempt* and *Failure*, **Assemblage 23** became one of the biggest names in industrial and EBM music today.

To further the American electro act's success, a third album, *Defiance*, was completed for October 2002. *Defiance* pushed **Assemblage 23**'s sound to the limits of only the imagination. Signature melody constructions, driving rhythms, non-stop beats, and highly emotional and personal lyrics made *Defiance* a logical follow-up to the widely reveled *Failure*.

For 2004, **Assemblage 23** returned with their first single off of the upcoming album *Storm*, *Let the Wind Erase Me*. The single proved to be different from the 'normal' single format, containing three entirely different versions of the title track, along with two single only b-sides, making the release flow more like a mini-album. The single gave fans a great indication of what to expect from **Assemblage 23**'s fourth album, *Storm*. Dubbed the most complex Assemblage 23 release thus far, *Storm* experimented with innovative sound compositions and elements, solidifying A23's position as the most successful American EBM act to date. In November of 2004, the second single off of *Storm*, titled *Ground*, was released in the same format as the previous one. Each song from the album continues to garner new fans and is make *Storm* a dance floor staple.

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